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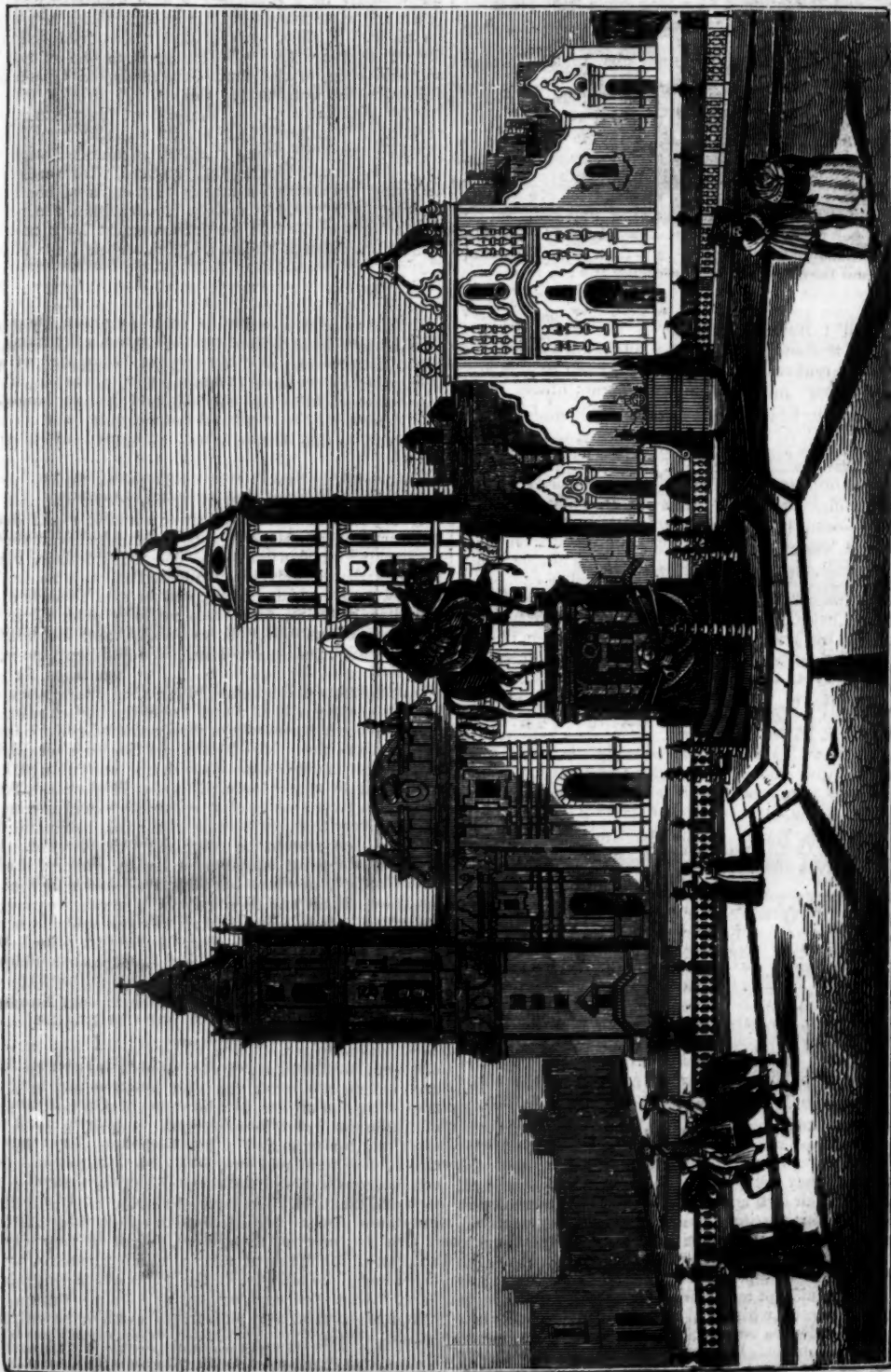
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THE CATHEDRAL AND PART OF THE GRAND SQUARE OF MEXICO.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE CITY OF MEXICO.

PART THE FIRST.

MEXICO, the capital of the republic of the same name, and of the ancient vice-royalty of New Spain, is situated in that part of America where the northern half of the continent narrows into the long isthmus which connects it with the southern portion. It is, in many respects, the most remarkable city in the New World; there is none other which has a history so full of interest attaching to it; nor indeed in the Old World are there many cities which surpass it in this point of view. It was the first capital which the Spaniards discovered on the continent of America, and it continued for a long while to be regarded as the metropolis of their vast possessions in that region of the globe.

The expedition which sailed from Cuba, under Herman Cortez, for the conquest of Mexico, reached the coast of that country in the spring of 1519. After a toilsome march into the interior, the Spaniards reached the vast plain in which the city of Mexico stands, and the sight which then greeted their eyes, was one that gladdened them much. "When they first beheld this prospect," says Robertson, using almost the very words of an eye-witness of the scene, "one of the most striking and beautiful on the face of the earth; when they observed fertile and well-cultivated fields, stretching further than the eye could reach; when they saw a lake resembling the sea in extent, encompassed with large towns, and discovered the capital city rising upon an island in the middle, adorned with its temples and turrets; the scene so far exceeded their imagination, that some believed the fanciful descriptions of romance were realized, and that its enchanted palaces and gilded domes were presented to their sight; others could hardly persuade themselves that this wonderful spectacle was any thing more than a dream."

As they drew near the city, a multitude of distinguished persons, adorned with plumes, and clad in mantles of fine cotton, came forth to receive them, saluting Cortez in the most respectful and submissive manner. They announced the approach of Montezuma, the emperor; and soon afterwards the monarch appeared in all his royal pomp and splendour. He was borne in a litter on the shoulders of four of his principal attendants, while others supported a canopy of curious workmanship over his head. Before him marched three officers, with rods of gold in their hands; these they lifted up on high at certain intervals, and then all the people bowed their heads, and hid their faces, as unworthy to look on so great a monarch. As he drew near, Cortez hastily dismounted, and advanced towards him in a respectful posture. Montezuma alighted, and leaning on the arms of two of his near relations, approached with a slow and stately pace, his attendants covering the street with cotton cloths, that he might not touch the ground. When the salutations were over, the Emperor conducted Cortez to the quarters which had been prepared for his reception, and immediately took leave of him, with the following remark: "You are now with your brothers in your own house; refresh yourselves after your fatigue, and be happy until I return."

The first act, however, of the Spanish general, was to take precautions for his safety; and, as the building allotted to him and his troops was surrounded by a stone wall, he soon rendered his position secure. In the evening he was visited by Montezuma, and a long conference ensued, in which the Emperor declared his superstitious reverence for the Spaniards, and his desire that they might consider themselves as masters in his dominions. On the morrow, Cortez and some of his principal officers were admitted to a public audience; and during the three following days, they were employed in viewing the city.

THE ANCIENT CITY OF MEXICO.

THE Mexicans were originally called *Aztecs*, and the country which they inhabited, bore the name of *Anahuac*. According to their own account, they had not long been in possession of this territory, when the Spaniards arrived, having first occupied it about the period corresponding to the close of the twelfth century of the Christian era. An ancient tradition was preserved among them, that their wanderings should not terminate till they met with an eagle perched on a cactus, which had its roots in the crevices of a rock. The prediction was realized in the year 1325, in one of a group of small islands in the lake of Texcoco; on the spot thus marked, the Aztecs raised a Teocalli, or "house

of the gods," and on the neighbouring islands they founded their capital. This was called Tenochtitlan; and it is the same which became afterwards so famous under the name of Mexico. It communicated with the main land by three dikes; these were not natural works; they were "made by the hand of man," and their breadth, according to the soldier-like measurement of Cortez, was equal to "two lances." A fourth causeway served to support an aqueduct which brought water from a neighbouring place called Chapultepec, for the lake afforded none that was good to drink. The city was built with great regularity, and must undoubtedly have presented a fine appearance; indeed one much more lively than the capital which now supplies its place. Modern writers have a favourite comparison for it; they are fond of likening it to one of the most splendid cities of the world—the far-famed Queen of the Adriatic—the water-seated Venice. Humboldt, of course, has his picture; and like the rest of his pictures, it is a vivid one. "Adorned," he says, "with numerous teocallis, like so many Mahometan steeples, surrounded with water and dikes, founded on islands covered with verdure, and receiving hourly in its streets thousands of boats which enlivened the lake, the ancient Tenochtitlan, according to the accounts of the first conquerors, must have resembled some of the cities of Holland, China, or the Delta of Lower Egypt."

The Spaniards were much struck with its beauty. Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a common soldier in the army of Cortez, and the author of a rough but faithful history of the conquest, when looking down on the city from the top of the great temple, compares it, from its regular division into squares, to an immense chess-board. The separate squares were surrounded by roads or canals, and each of them contained a temple.

In one of the letters which he addressed to Charles the Fifth, Cortez gives the following description:—"The city," he says, "is as large as Seville or Cordova. The streets, I merely speak of the principal ones, are very narrow and very large; some are half dry and half occupied by navigable canals, furnished with very-well constructed wooden-bridges. The market-place, twice as large as that of Seville, is surrounded with an immense portico, under which are exposed for sale all sorts of merchandise, eatables, ornaments made of gold, silver, lead, pewter, precious stones, bones, shells, and feathers, delft-ware, leather, and spun cotton. We find hewn stone, tiles, and timber fit for building. There are lanes for game, others for roots and garden-fruits; there are houses where barbers shave the head; and there are houses resembling our apothecary shops, where prepared medicines, unguents, and plasters are sold. There are houses where drink is sold. The market abounds with so many things, that I am unable to name them all to your Highness. To avoid confusion, every species of merchandise is sold in a separate lane. Every thing is sold by the yard, but nothing has hitherto been seen to be weighed in the market. In the midst of the great square is a house, which I shall call *Audiencia**, in which ten or twelve persons sit constantly for determining any disputes which may arise respecting the sale of goods. There are other persons who mix continually with the crowd, to see that a just price is asked. We have seen them break the false measures which they had seized from the merchants."

THE MARKET-PLACE AND ITS RICHES.

THE Market-place, spoken of by Cortez, must have been of enormous magnitude; its boundaries are still discernible, and sufficiently mark the vast space which it covered. The concourse of persons who resorted to it for the purpose of traffic was great in proportion; indeed, it is said that their number exceeded a hundred thousand. The attention of the Spaniards was, of course, chiefly drawn to the commodities exposed for sale, and these they found both rich and plentiful. Gomara, who wrote soon after the conquest, and derived his information chiefly from the mouths of the conquerors themselves, gives a very particular account of the different articles of merchandise. "Mats, there were," he tells us, in the words of his English translator, "both fine and coarse, of sundrie workmanship; also coals, wood, and all sorts of earthen vessel, glazed

* This was the name by which the Spaniards designated one of the buildings appropriated to the purposes of justice in their own country.

and painted very curiously; deer skins, both raw and tanned, in hair and without hair, of many colours, for shoemakers, bucklers, targets, jerkins, and lining of wooden corselets; also skins of other beasts, and fowls in feathers, readie dressed, of all sorts, the colours and strangeness whereof was a sight to behold." Among the richest merchandise was salt, the very cheapness of which has passed into a proverb with us. Another valuable commodity, and one which seems to have been, in a great measure, the staple production of the country, was "mantels of cotton-wool, of divers colours, both great and small; some for beds, others for garments and clothing, other for tapisserie to hang houses, other cotton-cloth for lining breeches, shirts, table-cloths, towels, napkins, and such-like things."

But "all the braverie" of the market was in the quarter appropriated to the workers in gold and feathers, the productions of whose art were held in high esteem. These consisted of imitations of butterflies, flowers, and other works of nature, which were wrought very skilfully, "in gallant colours," whose liveliness was "a thing marvellous to behold." The Indians were very expert in this work, which required much patience; and they would go without food a whole day, only "to place one feather in its due perfection, turning and tossing it to the light of the sunne, into the shade, or dark place," to see how it looked best. The goldsmiths formed an important class among the artificers of the city, though they were far from the high rank which they subsequently attained; for the Mexicans had not yet learnt to work the rich mines in which their country abounded, as they derived their supply of gold from the mountain rivers and torrents; yet their skill was considerable, as we may see from Gomara's account of what they could accomplish. "They will cast a platter in mold with eight corners, and every corner of severall metal,—that is to say, the one of gold, and the other of silver, without any kind of solder; they will also found, or cast, a little caldron, with loose handles hanging thereat, as wee use to cast a bell; they will also cast in mold a fish of metall, with one scale of silver on his backe and another of gold; they will make a parrot, or popinjay, of metall, that his tongue shall shake, and his head move, and his wings flutter; they will cast an ape in mold, that both hands and feet shall stirre, and hold a spindle in his hand, seeming to spin, yea, and an apple in his hand, as though he would eate it."

THE IDOLATRY OF THE MEXICANS.

THE ancient Mexicans were idolaters, and worshipped their false gods under a variety of images. They had a regular system of idolatry, "with its complete train of priests, temples, victims, and festivals;" but it was of a most savage and gloomy kind. In the words of Robertson, "its divinities were clothed with terror, and delighted in vengeance. They were exhibited to the people under detestable forms, which created horror. Fasts, mortifications, and penances, all rigid, and many of them excruciating to a degree, were the means employed to appease the wrath of their gods; and the Mexicans never approached their altars without sprinkling them with blood, drawn from their own bodies." The practice of human sacrifices was very general, and the common fate of captives in battle was to be offered up as victims to the god of war.

The idols of the Mexicans were very numerous. The most remarkable were the two which crowned the great temple of the capital; we shall describe them in speaking of that edifice. "There was another god who had a great image placed upon the top of the Chappell of Idols, and he was esteemed for a special and singular god above all the rest. This god was made of all kind of seeds that groweth in that country, and being ground, they made a certain paste tempered with children's blood, and virgins sacrificed, who were opened with their razors in the breasts, and their hearts taken out, to offer as first-fruits unto the idoll. The priests and ministers do consecrate this idoll with great pomp and many ceremonies. All the citizens are present at the consecration, with great triumph and incredible devotion. After the consecration, many devout persons came and sticked in the dowie image precious stones, wedges of gold, and other jewels. After all this pompe ended, no secular man may touch that holy image,—no, nor yet come into his chappell—nay, scarcely religious persons, except they were *Tlamacastli*, who are priests of order. They doe renew this image many times with new dough, taking away the old;—but

then blessed is he that can get one piece of the old rags for reliques, and chiefly for souldiers, who thought themselves secure therewith in the warres."

The temples of Mexico were also extremely numerous, some authors estimate the number at two thousand; but as Clavigero says, "we do not know that any one ever actually counted them." Besides that which was emphatically called the "great temple," there were seven or eight remarkable for their size. There was one dedicated to the god of the air, which had a very curious entrance; the edifice itself was round in form,—"for even as the aire goeth round about the heavens, even for that consideration, they made his temple round." The door was frightfully fashioned, being made to resemble a serpent's mouth, and being painted "with foule and devilish gestures, with great gums and teeth wrought, which was a thing to feare those that should enter in thereat, and especially the Christians, unto whom it represented very hell with that ugly face and monstrous teeth."

Among the curious buildings connected with religion, was a large prison like a cage, in which the Mexicans kept the idols of conquered nations, as if in imprisonment. In other places they preserved the heads of those who had been sacrificed, arranging them in regular order against walls, or stringing them, as it were, upon poles. There was one of these monuments at a short distance from the chief temple,—a "charnell house," as Gomara's translator calls it, "onely of dead men's heads, prisoners in warres, and sacrificed with the knife." It was a prodigious rampart of earth in the form of a half pyramid, having seventy beams erected on its surface, which were bored with different holes. Through these, sticks were passed across from one beam to another, and on each of them a number of heads were strung. Upon the steps also, leading to the top of the edifice, there was "grafted betwixt stone and stone, a scull with the teeth outwards;" and at each end of it was a tower, composed of only sculls and lime "and this having no other stuffe, seemed a strange sight. "Andrew de Tapia" says Gomara, "did certifie to me, that he and Gonçalo de Umbria, did reckon them in one day, and found a hundred thirtie and sixe thousand sculls on the poles, staves, and steps." As soon as a head began to crumble with age, the priest supplied its place with a fresh one, from the bone-heaps. The sculls of ordinary victims were stripped of the scalp; but those of men of rank and great warriors, they endeavoured to preserve with the skin, and beard, and hair entire;—"which served only," says Clavigero, "to render more frightful these trophies of their barbarous superstition."

THE GREAT TEMPLE.

THE Great Temple stood in the centre of the city, and occupied the present site of the cathedral, and part of the great square, represented in page 41. It was an earthen monument, of a pyramidal shape, covered with a light and porous material, similar to pumice-stone, its general arrangement being the same as that of the *teocalli* of Cholula*, and, indeed, of all Mexican temples. Bernal Diaz visited it with Cortez, and others of his companions, and gives us the following account of what he observed.

"The ascent to the temple was by 114 steps; when we had ascended to the summit, we observed on the platform, as we passed, the large stones whereon were placed the victims who were to be sacrificed. Here was a great figure which resembled a dragon, and much blood fresh spilled. Montezuma came out from an adulatory, in which his accursed idols were placed; Cortez then addressing himself to Montezuma, requested that he would do him the favour to show us his gods. Montezuma, having first consulted his priests, led us into a tower, where was a kind of saloon; there were two altars, highly adorned with richly wrought timber on the roof, and over the altars gigantic figures, resembling very fat men; the one on the right was Huitzilopotli, their war-god, with a great face and terrible eyes. This figure was entirely covered with gold and jewels, and his body bound with golden serpents; in his right hand he held a bow, and in his left a bundle of arrows. The little idol, which stood by him, represented his page, and bore a lance and target, richly ornamented with gold and jewels. The great idol had round his neck the figures of human heads and hearts, made of pure gold and silver, ornamented with precious stones of a blue colour; before the idol was a pan of incense, with three hearts of human victims which were then burning, mixed

* See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. V., p. 176

with copal. The whole of that apartment, both walls and floor, was stained with human blood, in such quantity as to give a very offensive smell. On the left was the other great figure, with a countenance like a bear, and great shining eyes, of the polished substance whereof their mirrors are made; the body of this idol also was covered with gold and jewels, and before him lay an offering of five human hearts. On the summit of the temple, and in a recess, the timber of which was most highly ornamented, we saw a figure, half human, and the other half resembling an alligator, inlaid with jewels, and partly covered with a mantle; this idol was said to contain the germ and origin of all created things, and was the god of harvests and fruits. The walls and altars were bestained like the rest; and in this place they had a drum of most enormous size, the head of which was made of the skins of large serpents. This instrument when struck, resounded with a noise that could be heard to the distance of two leagues, and was so doleful that it deserved to be named the music of the infernal regions. This," adds the good Spaniard, with that zeal which so strikingly distinguished the adventurers of his age, "with their horrible-sounding horns and trumpets, their great knives for sacrificing their human victims, and their blood-besprinkled altars, I devoted, and all their wickedness, to God's vengeance."

The establishment of priests attached to the great temple, was on a very extensive scale. Five thousand persons are said to have resided constantly in the various buildings enclosed within its outer walls; living "at their hearts' ease as servants and vassals unto the Gods:" they were maintained "with bread, fruit, flesh, fish, and fire-wood, as much as they needed," all their expenses being defrayed out of the revenues of the establishment. The temple was "marvellously rich;" certain towns were assigned for its support; and from these it drew large supplies of all that was needed for its service.

"Such, so great and strange" may we say in the words of Gomara, "was this temple of Mexico, for the service of the devil who had deceived those simple Indians."

MAGNIFICENCE OF THE MEXICAN KING.

The accounts which the Spanish writers have left us of the magnificence that prevailed in the court of King Montezuma, and of the state in which he lived in his capital, remind us forcibly of the pomp and grandeur which are generally supposed to be the accompaniments of an eastern despotism. The subjects of the Mexican monarch entertained a most exalted idea of their sovereign and his attributes; they held his person in the utmost veneration, and regarded his authority as entitled to the most implicit obedience. "His people," to use Gomara's words, "had him in such reverence, that he permitted none to sit in his sight, nor yet in his presence to wear shoes, nor look him in the face, except very few princes. Hee changed his owne apparell foure times every day, and hee never clothed himselfe againe with the garments which hee had once worn, but all such were kept in his guardrobe for to give in presentes to his servants and ambassadours, and unto valiant souldiers which had taken any enemy prisoner, and that was esteemed a great reward and a title of privilege. Hee bathed him in his hot-house foure times every day. Hee seldom went out of his chamber but when he went to his meate. Hee ente always alone, but solemnely, and with great abundance."

Every person, indeed, who entered the palace, either to serve the king, or to confer with him on any business, used to pull off his shoes and stockings at the gate. To appear before the sovereign in a pompous dress, would have been deemed disrespectful; consequently, all the great lords, when they were about to appear in the presence of majesty, stripped themselves of the rich dresses which they wore, or concealed their magnificence beneath humbler coverings. From this observance, only the nearest relatives of the sovereign were exempted. Even men of consequence, when they came from a distance, entered the palace bare-footed, in a plain habit; and, instead of going up to the gate directly, they advanced in a circuitous manner. All persons on entering the hall of audience, and before addressing the king, made three bows,—saying at the first, *Lord*; at the second, *My lord*; and at the third, *Great lord*. They spoke with lowered voices, and held their heads inclined in a posture of respectful attention; and the answer which the monarch vouchsafed to return them, through his secretaries, was received with as much humility as though it had been the judgment of an oracle.

The palace in which the king usually resided was a vast edifice of stone and lime, which had twenty doors opening into the public squares and streets; three great courts, in one of which was a beautiful fountain; several halls, and more than a hundred chambers. "The walles were made of masons' worke, and wrought of marble, jasper, and other blacke stone, with veines of red like unto rubies, and other stones, which glistered very faire: the roofes were wrought of timber, and curiously carved: the timber was cedar, cypresse, and pine-tree: the chambers were painted, and hung with cloth of cotton, and cloth made of conies' haire and feathers." All the servants of this palace were persons of rank; and besides the constant residents, there used to come six hundred nobles every morning, to attend the royal pleasure. They passed the whole day in the ante-chamber, conversing in a low voice, and waiting the orders of their sovereign; their servants remained without, and were so numerous as to occupy three of the small courts of the building. Like the rest of the royal residences, this palace was surrounded with "excellent faire gardens of medicinall herbes, sweete flowers and trees of Jelectable savour." Montezuma did not permit his grounds to be used for the growing of "pot-herbes, or things to be sold," saying that "it did not appertaine to kings to have things of profit among their delights and pleasures;" such traffic, he desired to leave to merchants.

HIS MENAGERIE.

AMONG the various establishments supported by the monarch of the Mexican Empire, there was not wanting one of that description which the sovereigns of more civilized countries have been accustomed to regard as a necessary appendage to the royal dignity,—we mean a repository for live animals. Montezuma had two houses in his capital for this purpose; one of them was appropriated to birds who did not live naturally by prey, and the other to birds of prey, quadrupeds, and reptiles. The fowl in the first house were very numerous, "and of such divers kindes, both in feathers and making, as sure it was an admiration for the Spaniards to behold, for the most of them they knew not, nor yet had at any time scene the like." The appetites of these creatures were consulted with scrupulous attention; the different classes of birds were respectively supplied with the kind of food to which they had been accustomed in their natural state of freedom. Those birds, whose habit it was to live upon fish, were supplied from ten ponds with a weight of three hundred pounds for their daily consumption; and that the taste of both river and sea birds might be gratified, some of the ponds were of fresh, and others of salt water. Three hundred "persons of service," besides a regular corps of physicians, were attached to this establishment; "some were to cleanse the ponds: other some did fish for baite: other some served the fowle with meate: others did loose and trimme their feathers: others had care to looke to their egges: others to set them abroad: and the principallest office was to plucke the feathers, for of them was made rich mantles, tapissary, targets, tuffes of feathers, and many other things wrought with gold and silver,—a most perfect worke."

The second house contained the birds of prey, and had large quarters and lodgings, "not because there were more fowle than in the other, but because they were bigger and to hawke withall, and were fowle of rapine, wherefore they were esteemed as more noble than all the others." Their daily allowance was five hundred "gynea cockes" (or turkeys), and they had three hundred "men of service," besides an infinite number of falconers and hunters. The lower halls of this building contained great cages made of timber; in these were lions, tigers, ounces, wolves, and a variety of other beasts. These animals were fed with "their ordinary, as gynea cockes, deere, dogges, and such like." Other apartments contained earthen vessels, wherein were snakes "as grosse as a man's thigh;" also ponds walled round, in which were enclosed crocodiles. "or lizards of twenty foote long, with such scales and head as a dragon hath."

Besides these things, Montezuma collected in his wild-beast establishment, all curious specimens of the human race which he could procure. In some halls he used to keep such men, women and children, as were born "white of colour," a thing "which did very seldome happen;" in others were preserved "dwarfs, crooke-backes, counterfeits and monstrous persons, in great number." It was said of these poor creatures, that they used to be purposely deformed

ANCIENT MEXICAN COSTUMES.



Warrior, with Cuirass and Buckler.

The Emperor Montezuma in a Court Dress.

Warrior, with Net

when they were children, "to set forth the king's greatness;" several of them always attended the sovereign at his dinner-time,—“all for majesty and to laugh at,” as Gomara says.

The Spaniards were very much astonished at all these wonderful sights. The number and variety of the wild beasts particularly excited their attention. “It was strange,” says Gomara, “to see the officers, in this house, how every one was occupied. Our men took great pleasure in beholding such strange things, but they could not away with the roaring of the lions, the fearful hissing of the snakes and adders, the doleful howling and barking of the wolves, the sorrowful yelling of the ounces and tigers, when they would have meate.”

HOSTILITY OF THE MEXICANS, AND RETREAT OF THE SPANIARDS ON THE “NIGHT OF SORROW.”

CORTES had not been long in Mexico, before he felt his situation to be one of much difficulty. To guard against the hostility of Montezuma, he formed and executed the bold resolution of seizing the sovereign's person. An open war with his subjects followed quickly; and Montezuma being brought forward by the Spaniards during a momentary engagement, to exercise his influence over the people, was slain by them. The king's death destroyed the last hope of a reconciliation, and left Cortes no other chance of safety than what might be found in a retreat.

It was on the first of July, towards midnight, that the Spaniards began this memorable movement. Many were slain, and many, less fortunate, fell alive into the hands of the enemy, only that they might meet a more horrible death.

The fortune of the Spaniards was indeed disastrous on this famous night,—the recollection of which was long afterwards preserved in Mexico, under the name of *noche triste*, or “sorrowful night.” But their calamities did not end with their escape from the city; many days elapsed before they could reach the territories of their Tlascalalan allies, and on one of those they had to fight a terrible battle with an immense army of their active enemies. The genius of Cortes prevailed on this occasion; he adopted the manœuvre of striking at the great standard, and as soon as he had captured it, the Mexicans fled.

RETURN OF THE SPANIARDS TO BESIEGE MEXICO.

Six months after his retreat, Cortes, having recruited his forces, returned to besiege Mexico, and soon attacked the city from three different quarters,—along the causeways communicating with the north, west, and south

The Tlascalans were a native tribe of America.

sides of the lake. Day after day, during a whole month, the assault was renewed, and at length, after much fighting, Guatimozin, whom the Mexicans had chosen king, ordered the troops to slacken their efforts, that they might allure the Spaniards forward, while he despatched a large body of chosen warriors through different streets, some by land, and others by water, towards the great breach in the causeway. On a signal which he gave, the priests in the chief temple struck the great drum consecrated to the god of war. “No sooner did the Mexicans hear its doleful sound, calculated to inspire them with contempt of death and enthusiastic ardour, than they rushed upon the enemy with frantic rage.” The rout was complete; more than twenty Spaniards were killed, and no less than forty fell alive into the hands of the enemy.

When night came, the Mexicans prepared to celebrate their triumph; and their defeated enemies were doomed to witness a horrid spectacle. Every quarter of the city was illuminated; the Great Temple shone with such peculiar splendour, that the Spaniards could plainly see the people in motion, and the priests busy in hastening the preparations for the death of the prisoners. Through the gloom they fancied they distinguished their companions by the whiteness of their skins, as they were stript naked, and compelled to dance before the image of the god to whom they were to be offered. They heard the shrieks of those who were sacrificed, and thought that they could distinguish each victim by the well-known sound of his voice.

Cortes now altered his mode of proceeding, and adopted the resolution of demolishing the city by degrees as his troops became masters of it.

The plan succeeded; the rubbish of the demolished houses, served to fill up the canals, and the Spanish cavalry were enabled to act in the city. Cortes was eagerly assisted in the work of destruction, by his Indian auxiliaries; for these people remembered the oppressions they had suffered from the Mexican kings, and longed ardently to see the capital destroyed. The inhabitants reproved them for the blindness of their zeal; in the words of Cortes, “those of the city said to our allies, that they did wrong in assisting us to destroy, because one day they would have to reconstruct with their hands the very same edifices, either for the besieged if they were to conquer, or for us Spaniards who in reality are now compelling them.” (for when this was written, the iron yoke of the conquerors had fallen on all alike) “to rebuild what was demolished.” The warning was indeed prophetic; but it passed unheeded.

Guatimozin bore up with courage against his misfortunes, and rejected with scorn every overture of peace; but when the fate of the city became desperate, he yielded to the entreaties of his nobles, and consented to attempt his escape. The Spaniards were too watchful; the officer in command of the brigantines, observing some large canoes

crowded with people, rowing across the lake with extraordinary rapidity, instantly gave the signal to chase. The swiftest of the vessels soon overtook them, and was preparing to fire into the foremost canoe, which seemed to carry some person of distinction, when at once the rowers dropt their oars, and all on board implored forbearance, as the Emperor was there. Guatimozin with a dignified composure gave himself up, requesting only that no insult might be offered to the Empress or his children; and he was then conducted to Cortez. "I made him sit down," says the conqueror, "and I treated him with confidence; but the young man put his hand upon the poniard which I wore at my side, and exhorted me to kill him, because since he had done his duty to himself and his people, he had no other desire than death."

Perhaps it would have been well for the reputation of Cortez, had he complied with the request; his memory would then have been spared the reproach with which his subsequent treatment of this ill-fated monarch has so deeply stained it. When the Spaniards took possession of the city, their avarice was sorely disappointed at the smallness of the booty which it contained; and many murmurs ensued. Anxious to appease the discontent, Cortez ordered Guatimozin and his chief favourite to be subjected to torture, in order to force from them a discovery of the royal treasure which they were supposed to have concealed. The punishment which he applied to his victims, was indeed a cruel one; he caused the soles of their feet to be gradually burned, after having first soaked them in oil. The young king was firm; but his fellow-sufferer, overcome by the anguish, turned a dejected eye towards his master, as if imploring permission to reveal all he knew. "Am I reposing on a bed of flowers?" was the monarch's reply;—the reproach which it conveyed was enough, and the dutiful favourite expired in silence. Cortez was seized with shame, and he ordered his royal victim to be relieved; but the life which he thus prolonged, was only reserved for new sufferings and indignities. Guatimozin was afterwards hanged on the same tree with two of the princes of his empire; and that his sufferings might be the more exquisite, he was suspended by the feet.

MEXICAN MODE OF WRITING.

It is noticed by Humboldt, as a remarkable fact, that although many marks of civilization and of the progressive perfection of language might be traced among the inhabitants of America, when we first became acquainted with them, not one native people throughout the immense extent of the new continent, had attained that analysis of sounds, "which leads to the most admirable, we might say the most miraculous of all inventions, an alphabet." The ancient Mexicans are no exception to the truth of this observation; they had not observed that the human organs of speech can utter only from twenty to thirty simple sounds, and that all the words which issue from our mouths, are merely combinations of those sounds, and their modifications. Consequently they could not record their ideas as we do, by having a distinct character, or *letter*, for each simple sound, and then in the same manner that nature combines sounds in the voice, so combining their corresponding symbols, or *letters*, on paper. When we wish to convey the idea of a "lion" to our readers, we put down together the characters, *l, i, o, n*, which have been fixed upon, to represent the different sounds, composing the name of that object; and any one of them who reads with his eye those marks so united, has the idea of the animal impressed on his mind, just as perfectly as if the word "lion" were spoken to his ear. Now the Mexicans would have effected the same purpose by making an actual picture of a lion; and in like manner they would have conveyed the ideas of other objects by means of paintings of the objects themselves.

This system was, of course, only applicable to objects which had a visible form; it was quite impossible to express *abstract ideas*—the ideas of things which had no corporeal existence, such as *numbers*, or the *days* and *months* of the year, in the same manner. Accordingly to represent these, as well as some other things, such as *speech*, *motion*, *earth*, *air*, *wind*, *day*, *night*, &c., the Mexicans used certain arbitrary marks—"real simple hieroglyphics," as Humboldt calls them. "These signs," says that writer, "added to the painting of an event marked in a very ingenious manner, whether the action passed during the day or the night, the age of the persons they wished to represent, whether they had been conversing,

and who among them had spoken most." They had advanced even a step further: they could record proper names by using what are called *phonetic hieroglyphics*, or marks which enabled the person who looked at them to know the sound of the names in question, and thus to pronounce them. As is generally the case with semi-barbarous nations, most of their proper names had some allusion to visible objects, objects which strike the senses. Thus, the verbal translation of Axajacatl (the name of one of the Mexican kings), is *face of water*, and that of Ilhuicamina, *arrow which pierces the sky*; accordingly, to represent those two monarchs, their painters united the hieroglyphics of water and sky, (or the arbitrary marks which they had fixed upon to represent those objects,) to the figure of a head and an arrow. Again, the names of the cities of Macuilxochitl, Quauhtinchan, Tehuilojocan, signify respectively, *five flowers*, *house of the eagle*, and *place of mirrors*; to indicate these three cities, the Mexicans painted a flower placed on five points, a house from which issued the head of an eagle, and a mirror of obsidian.

These are the three elements of the Mexican mode of writing; that which enters most largely into its composition is the first, the *picture writing* as Bishop Warburton called it. The whole system bears a good deal of resemblance to that practised by the ancient Egyptians; but the people of America were very distant from the perfection which their wonderful brethren of Africa had attained. The simple hieroglyphics which they used were very few in number; but a great many are needed to render easy the painting of ideas by means of them, and to make it approximate to writing. They had also among them the germs of phonetic characters, by the use of which they could record proper names, and this contrivance, in the words of Humboldt, "might have led them to the beautiful discovery of giving an alphabetic form to their simple hieroglyphics; but ages would have elapsed, before these nations of mountaineers who adhered to their manners and customs with the same invincible obstinacy as the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Hindoos, could have raised themselves to the decomposition of words, the analysis of sounds, the invention of an alphabet!"

COLLECTIONS OF MEXICAN PAINTINGS.

SEVERAL specimens of Mexican paintings have come down to our times, and many more would undoubtedly have reached us, but for the unfortunate precipitation of the first Spanish priests who visited Mexico. These zealous individuals came to the newly-conquered country with a thorough determination to root out the idolatry of its inhabitants; and accordingly, as soon as they arrived, they set themselves vigorously about destroying every thing which might recall to the vanquished people the memory of their former worship. The temples were quickly levelled with the ground; and their horrid idols were broken or buried in the ruins. The paintings did not escape; perhaps being less intelligible than other things, they were reckoned more dangerous. Certain it is, that the zeal of the destroyers must have been very active for them to have succeeded so well as they did in the work of destruction; for "the Mexican empire," to use the words of the Abbé Clavigero, "abounded with all those kinds of paintings, as their painters were innumerable, and there was hardly any thing left unpainted. Of all those," adds the same writer, "which were to be found in Tezeuco, where the chief school of painting was, they (the priests) collected such a mass in the square of the market, that it appeared like a little mountain; to this they set fire, and buried in the ashes the memory of many most interesting and curious events." Nevertheless, a few collections have at various times been sent to Europe, and deposited in public and private libraries, under the name of *Codices Mexicani*, or Mexican manuscripts.

One of the most valuable of the collections thus sent is unfortunately no longer in existence; but there is a rude copy of it, a mere outline engraving, preserved in the third volume of Purchas's *Pilgrimes*. The paintings which composed it were procured from the natives with great difficulty, by Antonio de Mendoza, the first Viceroy of Mexico, and despatched to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, with an account in Spanish of the Mexican interpretations. The ship which conveyed them was captured by a French cruiser, and the pictures fell into the hands of Andrew Thevet, the French king's geographer. On his death they were purchased by Hakluyt, who was chaplain to the English

ambassador in France, and brought to London; a translation of the manuscript was then made at the instance of Sir Walter Raleigh, but "none were willing to be at the cost of cutting the pictures." At length, by Hakluyt's will, they came into the possession of Purchas, who "obtained, with much earnestness, the cutting thereof for the presse," being especially urged to the task, as he himself tells us, by "that most industrious antiquary, judicious scholler, religious gentleman, our ecclesiastike secular, the churches champion, Sir Henry Spelman, Kt."

Purchas seems to have been properly impressed with the importance of these paintings; he ushers them in with a preface, wherein he calls them "the choicest of his jewels," and places them far above the many "Japonian and China rarities," which, as he quaintly tells his reader, "though so remote from our world are near to our work." A "chronicle without writing,"—"a historie in pictures, yea, a politicke, ethicke, ecclesiastike, oeconomike, historie, with just distinctions of times, places, acts, and arts;"—"such a thing, he says, had never before been known, and he flatters his readers by telling them, that it was a "present, thought fit for him whom the senders esteemed the greatest of princes, and yet now presented to their hands before it could arrive in his presence." This collection, the value of which is much increased by the accompanying interpretations, consists of three parts, each treating of a different subject. The first gives the history of the Mexican kings, from the foundation of the capital until the death of the unfortunate Montezuma the Second; the second contains a list of the tributes paid to them by every province and town; and the third exhibits a view of the domestic institutions of the people.

This collection, as Humboldt says, throws much light over the history, political state, and domestic life of the Mexicans. At the beginning of the first section, we distinguish the ten chiefs that founded the empire, having the symbols of their names marked over their heads. They are represented as meeting with the eagle and cactus, which, as we have before observed, were to denote the spot on which the wanderings of the Aztecs should terminate. A house serves to designate the new city, and a buckler, with arrows, its occupation by force. The symbols near two other houses, surrounded by combatants, teach us the names of the two cities first conquered. "The remainder of the history," says M. de Palin,—a French writer quoted by Humboldt, and the author of an esteemed work on hieroglyphics, "is composed in the same spirit, and of similar articles; every where we see weapons, the instruments of conquest, between the figures of the conquering princes and of the conquered cities, with the symbols of their names, and of the years. The last were arranged near the representation of each event, in a sort of frame, which encircles the paintings."

The second section is a complete tribute-roll of the Mexican empire, exhibiting the nature and quantity of the articles which each city furnished to the king's treasury, or to particular temples. These articles consist of all the useful productions of nature and of art,—gold, silver, and precious stones, weapons, mats, cloaks, and blankets, quadrupeds, birds, and feathers, cacao, maize, and vegetables, coloured paper, borax, salts, &c. These were represented either by actual paintings of the articles themselves, or by figuring the things in which they were usually contained, as vases, baskets, bags, chests, and packages of a determinate size. The quantity is expressed by means of numerical signs; for instance, units are denoted by points or balls, twenty by a fixed arbitrary character, four hundred by an ear of corn, a pine-apple, or a quill, in which gold-dust was kept, and eight thousand by a purse,—a value determined by the custom of enclosing so many thousand cacao nuts in a bag.

The third section embraces the whole life of the citizens, presenting a picture of all the actions which the law prescribes. The first painting indicates the ceremonies to be performed at birth; the parent presents his child in the cradle before the high priest, and the master that taught the use of weapons, with the view of considering its future destination in life. The subsequent paintings mark the course to be pursued by the parent towards the child till it attains the age of fifteen years; each of them is double, as it were, having a representation of the father tutoring the boy in one portion, and of the mother tutoring the girl in the other. The quantity of food is fixed with precision, and is the same for both sexes; one cake is sufficient till the child attains the age of six years; then a cake and a

half is allowed. A number of little circles marked on the painting denote the age to which it applies.

At five years of age the boy carries loads, and the girl attends her mother spinning. At six, the girl herself spins; and the boy is taught the use of the fishing net. At eight years of age, the instruments of punishment are held out as a terror to the idle or disobedient; the words of admonition coming from the mouths of the parents, are represented by a succession of little tongues; and the attention of the children is evinced by their suppliant posture, and the tears that are running down their cheeks. At nine, the punishment is actually inflicted: the boy is bound hand and foot, and resting his body on the sharp thorns of the agave-leaves, while the father pricks him about the body. The girl is pricked upon the wrist only. At ten years of age, a further punishment is inflicted; both boy and girl, are being beaten with a cudgel. At eleven, the infliction becomes more severe; the painting referring to this age shows how, to use the words of Purchas's text, the children "which would not be reformed with wordes nor stripes, were chastened by giving them into the nose, the smoke of aixa (pimento), a grievous, cruell torment, to the intent that they should be reformed, and not be vicious persons, and vagabonds." They have still only a cake and a half "because they should not be gluttons."

At the age of twelve, we have again a refinement in the art of punishing; "the boy or girl," says Purchas, "of the age of twelve years, which would not receive quietly, counsel nor correction at their father's hands,—the father tooke that boy, and tyed him hand and foot naked, and stretched him on the ground in a dirtie wet place, where he lay a whole day. At the ages of thirteen and fourteen, the children of both sexes, share the labours of their parents; they row, fish, cook, or weave. At fifteen, the father presents two sons,—one to the high-priest, and the other to a master of the use of weapons; this being the age at which they are to choose their future course of life: the girls are settled by marrying. From this period, the years are no longer reckoned; we see the young man follow and serve the priests and warriors; receiving instructions and undergoing chastisements in each career. "He obtains the honours," says M. de Palin, "attached to employments; blazoned bucklers, which are the marks of noble actions,—the red riband, with which the head of the initiated knight is encircled,—and the other distinctions which the sovereign grants to valour, according to the number of the prisoners made." The last painting, which represents a *tlatoani*, or governor of a province, strangled for revolting against his sovereign, is the most complicated and ingenious of all; for the same picture, says Humboldt, records the crime of the governor, the punishment of his whole family, and the vengeance exercised by his vassals against the messengers who were the bearers of the order of the Mexican monarch. This event brings on the stage, messengers of state, spies, officers of justice, judges, the great tribunals of the empire, and finally, the sovereign himself seated on his throne.

We have selected several specimens of Mexican paintings from Humboldt's costly *Atlas Pittoresque*, in which the originals are imitated in all the brilliancy of their colouring.

The Engraving marked fig. 1, denotes the arrival of the first Spanish bishop in Mexico, in the year 1532, and fig. 2, his death in 1549; the footsteps mark his arrival, and the skull attached to the prostrate figure his death, while the characters in the corners serve to show the dates.

Fig. 3 represents a fall of snow, which caused a great mortality among the natives, by destroying the corn that had been sown.

Fig. 4, the baptism of an Indian by a Spanish priest.

Fig. 5, the insurrection and punishment of the negroes of Mexico in 1537.

Fig. 6, the appearance of two Comets in 1490 and 1529.

Fig. 7, the ravages made by the small-pox among the Indians in 1538.

Some of these paintings, as our readers will perceive, are of a date subsequent to the conquest, while others are of an age previous to that event.

The Engraving in p. 45, exhibits three specimens of Mexican costume, delineated by painters in the reign of Montezuma the Second, when Cortez first visited the capital. Figs. 1 and 2 represent Mexican warriors; the first is armed with a cuirass of cotton and a buckler; the second is almost naked, and has his body wrapped in a net of large

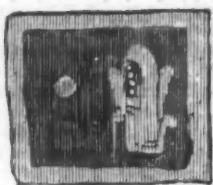


Fig. 1.

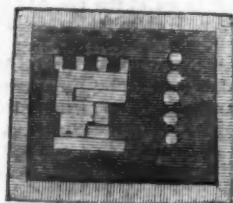


Fig. 2.

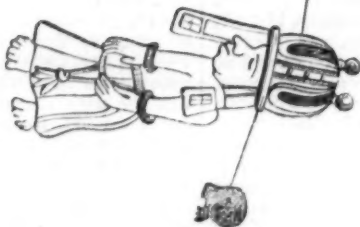


Fig. 4.

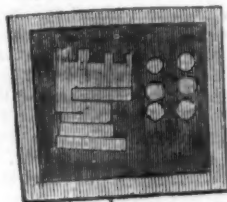


Fig. 5.

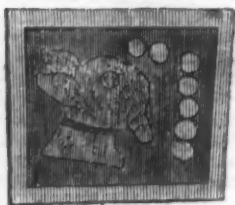


Fig. 7.

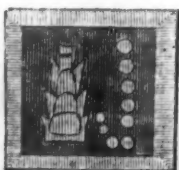


Fig. 3.

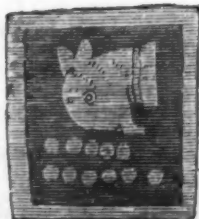
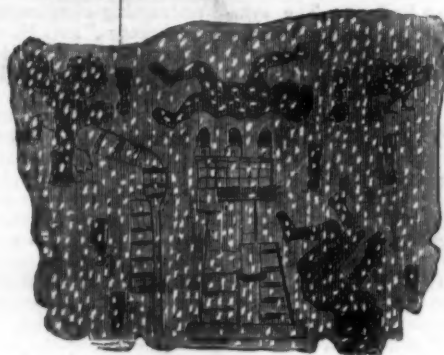


Fig. 6.



meshes, which he uses to throw over the head of his antagonist. The figure No. 3, represents the unfortunate Montezuma himself in a court-dress, such as he wore in his palace. His robe is bordered with pearls; his hair turned back to the top of his head, and tied with a red riband,—the military distinction of princes and the most valiant commanders. His neck is ornamented with a collar of precious stones, and he holds in one hand flowers,

and in the other a reed with a vase of odoriferous resin. His feet are naked; but we are told that the Mexican painters generally represented kings and great nobles with naked feet, to indicate that they were not born to make use of their legs, and that they ought constantly to be carried in palanquins on the shoulders of their domestics.

[In another Supplement we shall continue this subject, giving our readers an account of the Modern City of Mexico.]